

TOWN OF STOW
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION

Minutes of the December 9, 2021 Economic Development & Industrial Commission Meeting

Members Present: Thomas Farnsworth, Bob Collings, Serena Howlett, Jen Gero, Mary Bradt-Mintz

Thomas Farnsworth called the meeting to order at 5:30

Member Updates

Bob Collings provided an update on Green Advisory Committee (GAC) business. Bob Collings said the recent federal infrastructure bill could provide Stow with funds to be applied toward local green energy projects. Bob Collings said the GAC is working to identify projects that can be funded by a combination of the federal infrastructure bill and other state programs. Bob Collings said that federal funding will certainly be available to develop new Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure. Bob Collings said the GAC has discussed converting the abandoned Mobil gas station in Lower Village into an EV charging facility and has not heard any response to the proposal from the site owner. Bob Collings said Hudson Light & Power has no concerns about the electricity needs for such a facility but has made it clear that they cannot financially support such a project.

Bob Collings said Hudson Light & Power is potentially interested in the former Bose campus for a solar electricity storage site. Town Planner Jesse Steadman said he had recently spoke with a Hudson Light & Power representative, and that they had not mentioned interest in the site for electricity storage.

Bob Collings mentioned that Minuteman Airfield is planning some expansions, including expanded flight instruction buildings and a possible ground-mounted solar installation.

Serena Howlett asked if the GAC had discussed the need for repair facilities for electric vehicles. Bob Collings said the GAC has not yet discussed that need but mentioned that Tesla has a program to install EV batteries that are near the end of their service life into renewable energy storage facilities.

Mary Bradt-Mintz said she received a letter from a Hastings St resident listing concerns about Lower Village re-zoning proposals.

Bob Collings mentioned that the Select Board is expected to work with a consultant to strategize ways to spend federal ARPA funds. Bob Collings said the GAC is interested in accessing those consulting services to identify potential funding sources for other projects. Bob Collings said the GAC is compiling a list of possible projects, and suggested other committees and boards do the same to assist the Select Board in prioritizing ARPA expenditures.

Bob Collings requested that the Select Board release its plan to spend ARPA funds. Jesse Steadman said the Select Board/Town Administrator's spending consultant will reach out to boards and committees for input on spending priorities, and the EDIC will have a chance to provide such input in coming months.

FY2023 Budget Discussion

Jesse Steadman provided an update on the EDIC's current funds. Jesse Steadman said the EDIC requested a budget of \$1500 in FY2022, and currently has a balance of \$3,590. Jesse Steadman said the previous budget request had been requested to share costs of holiday decoration in Lower Village with business owners.

Bob Collings said the EDIC should request \$25-30k for a study to propose Sign Bylaw revisions.

The EDIC discussed possible budget requests to advance Sign Bylaw revisions and a water feasibility study for the Lower Village District.

Bob Collings said that the Meetinghouse Apartments is near a substantial aquifer, which could provide water to the rest of the Lower Village District. Serena Howlett said the apartments have had some permitting issues with their water systems which have only recently been resolved, and that she is doubtful residents would want to create possible difficulties by expanding the system.

Bob Collings expressed concern that the opportunity to fund a water feasibility study will have passed if the committee waits until the next Annual Town Meeting to bring forward the proposal.

Bob Collings requested the Select Board's ARPA expenditure consultant meet with the EDIC to discuss funding priorities.

*Serena Howlett moved to request to the Select Board a special Town meeting for a warrant article to fund a water feasibility study for Lower Village in the amount of \$30,000
Mary Bradt-Mintz seconded*

Bob Collings expressed concern that the Select Board will think the EDIC is jumping the gun on the proposal, given that the Town will have a consultant to advise on how to spend newly available funding. Bob Collings expressed concern that the Select Board will not convene a Special Town Meeting just for a single \$30k warrant article. Serena Howlett said the Select Board should be given the study cost quote from Weston & Sampson for reference.

*Serena Howlett moved to amend the motion to include language to request \$30k in ARPA funding or convene a Special Town Meeting to fund the water feasibility study for Lower Village
Tom Farnsworth seconded*

Roll Call Vote: Thomas Farnsworth -**Yea**; Bob Collings -**Yea**; Serena Howlett -**Yea**;
Jen Gero -**Yea**; Mary Bradt-Mintz -**Yea**

Bob Collings said the EDIC should also consider bringing forward a warrant article to fund a consultant to assist on a revision of the sign bylaw. Bob Collings proposed that the ARPA consultant also be made aware that sign bylaw revisions are a priority for the EDIC. Serena Howlett suggested inviting Town Administrator Denise Demboski to discuss the importance of the sign bylaw.

Tom Farnsworth said he will draft a letter to the Town Administrator to invite her to further discussions with the EDIC regarding funding priorities, as well as possible avenues to fund a water feasibility study.

The EDIC discussed requesting an annual \$1,000 in funding and carrying over past funds toward replacing pole banners in Lower Village. The Commission agreed to include a Special Non-recurring article in their budget \$30k to fund the feasibility study if the Select Board declines to fund the project.

Serena Howlett motioned to adjourn
Bob Collings seconded

Respectfully submitted,
Malcolm Ragan